

LUPUS

WHAT IS LUPUS?

Lupus is an autoimmune disease. This means the immune system does not work right. The body's immune system makes anti-bodies. These anti-bodies attack the body's cells and tissues. Many parts of the body may be involved such as joints, skin, kidneys, blood vessels, heart and liver.

CAUSE

The cause of lupus is unknown and it is likely there is no single cause. The following things may work together to cause this disease:

- The genes you were born with,
- your environment, and
- your hormones.

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF LUPUS

- Painful or swollen joints
- Muscle pain
- Unexplained fever
- Very tired
- Red rash or color change on the face
- Chest pain upon deep breathing
- Unusual loss of hair
- Pale or purple fingers or toes from cold or stress (Raynaud's disorder)
- Sun sensitivity
- Swelling (edema) in legs or around eyes
- Swollen glands

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is based on a physical exam and a history of your symptoms. Your doctor may order lab tests. No single blood test alone is diagnostic of lupus. Lab test that might be ordered include:

- Complete blood count,
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)-an elevated ESR indicates inflammation in the body,
- Urinalysis,
- Blood chemistries, and
- Skin or kidney biopsy.

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Arthritis

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TREATMENT

The treatment of lupus will vary from person to person. It will depend on which part(s) of the body is involved. It will also depend on how active the disease is. Treatment needs may change over time. Taking medicine to reduce swelling and lower the activity of the immune system, balancing rest with exercise, and eating a balanced diet may all be part of a treatment plan.

Common medications used to treat lupus include:

- Aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs
- Antimalarial drugs
- Glucocorticoids
- Methotrexate, Cyclosporine, or Azathioprine

PREVENTION

There are several things that you can do to prevent future flares:

- Learn to recognize warning signs
- Maintain good communication with your doctor
- Set down-to-earth goals and priorities
- Limit time in the sun.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Limit stress. (As much as possible.)
- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise. (When possible.)
- Develop a support system.

**For more information contact:
Missouri Arthritis & Osteoporosis Program:
1-800-316-0935 or
Arthritis Foundation: 1-800-283-7800**